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Implementation of agreed conclusions 2001/1 of the Economic and Social Council on the role of the United Nations in promoting development, particularly with respect to access to and transfer of knowledge and technology, especially information and communication technologies, inter alia, through partnerships with relevant stakeholders, including the private sector

Report of the Secretary-General**

* E/2002/100 and Add.1.

** The submission of this report was delayed owing to the need to consult with a number of United Nations agencies and relevant offices and reflect the latest developments in the work of the United Nations on information and communication technologies.

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Executive summary

The need for technology transfer and better access to knowledge arises from the fact that, while knowledge and technological development are among the critical determinants of economic growth and sustainable development, there is a considerable concentration of knowledge, and the technologies deriving from it, in a limited number of countries. The majority of the world population still lives in poverty and many have not yet reaped the full benefits of the information and communication technologies (ICT) revolution.

Against this backdrop and pursuant to the ministerial declaration of the Economic and Social Council's 2000 high-level segment entitled "Development and international cooperation in the twenty-first century: the role of information technology in the context of a knowledge-based global economy", the Council adopted agreed conclusions 2001/1 pertaining to the role of the United Nations in promoting development, particularly with respect to access to and transfer of knowledge and technology, especially ICT, inter alia, through partnerships with relevant stakeholders, including the private sector at its 2001 coordination segment. Agreed conclusions 2001/1 placed emphasis on identifying ways and means to provide and improve effective access to and transfer of knowledge and technology to developing countries.

The present report highlights the major implementation efforts of the United Nations system to follow up Council agreed conclusions 2001/1. It also discusses some of the activities that had been initiated before the adoption of the agreed conclusions but contributed greatly to addressing the actions recommended in the agreed conclusions. In the final section of the report, recommendations are made for the further consideration of the Council.

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I. Background

1. The Economic and Social Council considered the theme "The role of the United Nations in promoting development, particularly with respect to access to and transfer of knowledge and technology, especially information and communication technologies (ICT), inter alia, through partnerships with relevant stakeholders, including the private sector" at its coordination segment of 2001.

2. As a result of its deliberations, the Council adopted agreed conclusions 2001/1.[1] The deliberations of the Council helped to further advance the work started pursuant to the ministerial declaration of its 2000 high-level segment entitled "Development and international cooperation in the twenty-first century: the role of information technology in the context of a knowledge-based global economy".[2] Recalling Council agreed conclusions 2001/1, the General Assembly, in its resolution 56/258 of 31 January 2002, decided to convene a Meeting of the Assembly consisting of three plenary meetings devoted to bridging the digital divide and promoting digital opportunities in the emerging information society.

3. The establishment of the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) Task Force, officially launched by the Secretary-General in November 2001, was a major breakthrough towards the further enhancement of the collaboration among the organizations of the United Nations system and with other stakeholders in helping bridge the digital divide and implement the Council's guidance. Since its official launch, the ICT Task Force has made significant progress in bringing together all stakeholders. It produced concrete outcomes through its six thematic Working Groups and five regional networks, contributed to drawing the attention of policy makers as well as the public to the importance of ICT for development, and helped catalyse multi-stakeholder partnerships to achieve greater impact with respect to making global digital opportunity a reality.

4. The forthcoming World Summit on the Information Society in 2003 and 2005 could be an opportune occasion to review the effectiveness of the efforts made by the United Nations system, and to discuss further action to enhance coordination and partnership to promote knowledge and technology transfer, as the Summit will address the broad range of questions concerning the information society. The ICT Task Force and the aforementioned meeting of the General Assembly on bridging the digital divide and promoting digital opportunities in the emerging information society are expected to contribute to the preparation of the Summit.

5. The importance placed by the Council on the enhancement of cooperation between the United Nations and all relevant partners, in particular the private sector, was well reflected in the consultations of the General Assembly during its fifty-sixth session. In consequence, the Assembly adopted resolution 56/76 of 1 December 2001 entitled "Towards global partnership" which for the first time established the principle of good corporate citizenship.

6. The present report highlights progress in implementing key provisions of agreed conclusions 2001/1 requiring follow-up by the United Nations system in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 45/264 and 50/227. The status of follow-up to agreed conclusions 2001/1 is presented in section II.[3]

II. Follow-up activities

7. The status of follow-up to agreed conclusions 2001/1 is laid out below in dual-column format. The left-hand column contains provisions of agreed conclusions 2001/1 that call for action; the right-hand column presents the status of follow-up corresponding to each action-oriented paragraph. The paragraph numbers in the left-hand column refer to those in agreed conclusions 2001/1.

Council's recommendation	*Activities undertaken since the coordination segment of the Council's substantive session of 2001*
1. Developed countries should share with developing and transition economy countries their experience in promoting and establishing ICT sectors in their own economies so that mistakes are avoided and benefits maximized (para. 5).	1. Lessons learned and experience-sharing programmes hosted by the United Nations system continued to be an effective means of learning in the field of technology transfer, including ICT. Many programmes, such as the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) Exchange, the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) United Nations electronic trade Documents (UNeDocs) project, the Best Practices database of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), and the Information for Development Programme (InfoDev) and the Development Gateway of the World Bank, promote lessons learned and experience-sharing as part of their North-South as well as South-South collaborative initiatives. The ICT Task Force (see box 1) has launched its web site and portal which provide a global platform for sharing best practices in the area of ICT for development with multi-stakeholders. The ICT Task Force offers a common framework for partnership and resource-sharing by providing global and regional platforms for issues on ICT for development. The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) reviewed and highlighted the main lessons learned in the past decade of reform in the ICT sector worldwide in *World Telecommunications Development Report, 2002*. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has been facilitating information-sharing to raise awareness on the constant evolution of ethical, legal and societal challenges brought about by new technologies through its online "Observatory on the Information Society". The Observatory, which has been further developed and was regularly updated in 2001, provides a global watch service on the World Wide Web on officially adopted legislation, work plans, strategies and policies governing institutional, national and international activities bearing on the information society. ECE conducted a survey series on best practice in Internet development in transition economies, which identified international best practice cases for transferring ICT to transition economies, and provides strategic orientation to Governments, administrations and businesses and identifies crucial success factors for implementation. ECE has also established a task force to promote and support the use of electronic information tools for the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (ECE/CEP/43).

Box 1

Information and Communication Technologies Task Force

In response to the ministerial declaration of the high-level segment of the substantive session of 2000 of the Council and Council resolution 2000/29 of 28 July 2000, the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force (ICT Task Force) was created and officially launched on 20 November 2001 by the Secretary-General. The ICT Task Force provides a platform and focal point for establishing strategic direction, policy coherence and coordination, and advocacy in relation to the global agenda on ICT for development. It has the mandate to provide overall leadership to the United Nations role in helping to formulate strategies for the development of ICT and putting those technologies at the service of development, and forging a strategic partnership between the United Nations system, private industry and financing trusts and foundations, donors, programme countries and other relevant stakeholders in accordance with relevant United Nations resolutions. Six thematic Working Groups under the Task Force were established on ICT policy and governance, national and regional e-strategies, human resource development and capacity-building, resource mobilization, low-cost connectivity and access and business enterprise and entrepreneurship. These Working Groups work in collaboration with other ICT initiatives, including the G-8 Dot Force Implementation Teams, in order to ensure coherence and complementarity. The ICT Task Force is further assisted in developing its strategies and policies by a high-level panel of advisers, a group of distinguished individuals with background and experience in ICT for development and related fields.

Council's recommendation	*Activities undertaken since the coordination segment of the Council's substantive session of 2001*
2. Constraints that prevent the public and private sectors, as well as citizens, scientists and research institutions, from accessing knowledge can and should be overcome. In this context, ways and means to provide and improve effective access to and transfer of knowledge and technology to developing countries need to be identified (para. 7).	2. With the recognition that knowledge is a key for development, an increasing number of United Nations agencies have been implementing activities to narrow the knowledge gap between developed and developing countries. For example, the ICT Task Force has established a working group to assess capacity gaps and demand and help to provide effective access to and transfer of knowledge to developing countries. The World Health Organization (WHO) and the world's six major medical journal publishers entered a new initiative that has enabled close to 100 developing countries to gain access to vital scientific information through the Internet. The initiative also supported the Health InterNetwork, a project introduced by the Secretary-General at the Millennium Summit. WHO is also building the Health InterNetwork portal based on needs assessments and by stressing priority public-health programmes. ITU has earmarked some 30 million Swiss francs, plus 5 million Swiss francs per year, to fund projects aimed at promoting access to and effective use of ICT for development, many of which

Council's recommendation	*Activities undertaken since the coordination segment of the Council's substantive session of 2001*
	have been allocated for the support of six Centres of Excellence in developing countries. The Commission on Science and Technology for Development plans to analyse the role of foreign direct investment (FDI) in knowledge and technology transfer and also to develop policy frameworks for the successful acquisition, adaptation and utilization of ICT on the basis of case studies.
3. The relevant policies and approaches must encompass addressing cost, technological and capacity constraints as well as the need for transparent legal and regulatory frameworks and international cooperation for transfer of knowledge and technology on concessional, preferential and favourable terms to the developing countries, as mutually agreed, taking into account the need to protect intellectual property rights and the special needs of developing countries (para.7).	3. The General Assembly, in resolution 56/182, reinforced the Council's emphasis on the importance of facilitating access to and transfer of knowledge and technology on concessional, preferential and favourable terms to the developing countries. As many countries have yet to establish policies that are specific to ICT, the United Nations system could play an important role in supporting these countries to ensure that policies and approaches address effective means to access knowledge and technology with due respect to the obstacles these countries face. In this regard, the ICT Task Force has established regional networks aiming to assist developing countries in identifying the most relevant approaches and modalities for developing their own models and strategies that would respond to their specific needs. Several national e-strategy meetings, sponsored by the ICT Task Force and its regional nodes, are planned in 2002. UNESCO conducted two surveys in Asia and the Pacific to support national and regional ICT policy planning. The first survey was undertaken to provide perspectives on Internet content with a view to establishing appropriate regulatory mechanisms and the second focused on Internet infrastructure and e-governance in the Pacific. On policy formulation, UNESCO assisted its member States in developing national information policies on youth within the framework of the INFOYOUTH Programme. Aiming for practical solutions to the challenges raised by the impact of electronic commerce on intellectual property rights, the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) has launched an outreach programme called the WIPO Digital Agenda. The Asian and Pacific Centre for Transfer of Technology (APCTT), the regional institution of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), provides technology transfer services focusing, inter alia, on environmentally sound technologies and technology management. During this reporting period, 47 events related to technology transfer were organized/co-organized in 14 countries of the region and more than 2,500 persons were trained. To enhance national policies, strategies and regulatory frameworks for investment and technology promotion, UNIDO assists its member States in designing or enhancing policies, strategies and instruments for investment and technology promotion.

Council's recommendation	*Activities undertaken since the coordination segment of the Council's substantive session of 2001*
4. E-commerce and growth of integrated financial, production and supplier networks should be a potential to enhance developing-country access to markets and finance, and not emerge as a new barrier (para. 8).	4. While the global economy has provided opportunities for those who took advantages of the knowledge-based technological changes, many developing countries and countries with economies in transition are yet facing marginalization in a new and emerging dimension to international trade, including e-commerce and growth of integrated financial, production and supplier networks. *The E-Commerce and Development Report, 2001*, published by UNCTAD, warned that this uneven development would risk further widening the gap between the North and the South. The publication intends to be a reference tool for policy makers and practitioners in developing countries to find new, creative and quick-acting means to spread the benefits of the digital revolution. Besides, the ICT Task Force with the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Informatics and AIT Global, Inc., organized Global E-commerce 2002, a two-day forum of intensive high-level presentations and expert panels, designed especially for diplomats, senior executives of the private sector and United Nations officials. The forum provided ideas and discussions on how e-commerce enables developing countries to participate in the global economy in which the work of the ICT Task Force was highlighted. ITU, in partnership with private sector companies, is implementing an e-commerce project to build e-transaction infrastructures and services in more than 100 countries. ECLAC examined the extent of the impact of e-commerce by reviewing e-commerce and promotion policies for the small and medium-scale enterprises in East Asia and Latin America. Upon request from member countries (typically central banks or ministries of finance within developing countries), IMF provides technical assistance in the implementation of time-series data management systems. This has involved knowledge transfer on the selection, implementation, and work practices associated with the use of specialized commercial information technology (IT) products for managing economic and financial time-series data within these national institutions. IMF has also provided advice and assistance in the establishment of the essential IT infrastructure needed to support this application environment.
5. Consider information and communication technologies for the empowerment of women and to reduce gender inequalities (para. 5).	5. As pointed out in the five-year review report of the Secretary-General,[4] on the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action,[5] traditionally, gender differences and disparities have been ignored in policies and programmes dealing with the development and dissemination of improved technologies.[4] Against this backdrop and pursuant to the agreed conclusions, a number of activities have been undertaken by the United Nations system. For example, ESCAP conducted an Expert Group Meeting: ICT from a Gender Perspective to review the national, regional and global initiatives for equal ICT access from a gender perspective and to assess how these initiatives had been translated into gender-sensitive policies in the Asian and Pacific region. The United Nations Development Fund

Council's recommendation	*Activities undertaken since the coordination segment of the Council's substantive session of 2001*
	for Women (UNIFEM) supported by the ICT Task Force formed a Global Advisory Committee comprising African information technology (IT) entrepreneurs living in the Diaspora and in Africa, as well as representatives from the private sector and the United Nations system. The ITU Task Force on Gender Issues organized several awareness-raising workshops and seminars. UNESCO initiated a project to open learning communities for gender equity which builds in particular on UNESCO-sponsored multi-purpose community telecentres. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) plans to use ICT for improving rural women's and girls' access to education and training on the sustainable use and management of natural resources, in order to increase their equitable participation in food security. Various other activities implemented by the United Nations system on gender and ICT can be looked at under the inventory of gender-specific ICT projects of the United Nations system compiled by the Task Force on Gender issues under the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality.
6. Recognizing the importance of effective coordination within the United Nations system, the Council stressed that the ICT Task Force should build upon the expertise that already exists within the United Nations system, including the Commission on Science and Technology for Development and its work, and also requested the Secretary-General to bring the Commission into the system-wide coordination regarding ICT (para. 10).	6. The General Assembly, in its resolution 56/182 entitled "Science and technology for development" underscored the crucial role of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development in coordinating the activities of the United Nations system in the area of science and technology for development. In that resolution, the Assembly also encouraged the United Nations system to take advantage of the coordinating role and expertise of the Commission in the area of science and technology for development, where possible, in the follow-up to and preparation for major international conferences and summits. The establishment of the ICT Task Force embodied the Council's call for effective and meaningful collaborative efforts involving Governments, multilateral institutions, the donor community, the private sector, civil society and other relevant stakeholders to enhance the developmental impact of ICT. To date, 28 organizations are represented in the ICT Task Force, including those from Governments, private, non-profit, United Nations and other international organizations, and civil society. At its second meeting in February 2002, the ICT Task Force decided to enhance its collaboration with the relevant United Nations structures, such as the Commission and the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Informatics, in areas of common interest, to strengthen research and analytical support for the ICT Task Force work programmes. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), as the substantive secretariat of the Commission, has been feeding the outcomes of the ICT Task Force meetings into the Commission while reporting activities of the Commission to the ICT Task Force.

Council's recommendation	*Activities undertaken since the coordination segment of the Council's substantive session of 2001*
7. The Council called upon Member States, the organizations of the United Nations system within their man dates and other stakeholders to extend their full support to the Task Force, inter alia, through financial resources on the basis of voluntary contributions (para. 10).	7. Financial contribution to the Task Force were committed by Canada, Finland, France, Ireland, Italy, the Republic of Korea, Sweden, the Markle Foundation and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The Task Force also received in-kind contributions from Hewlett-Packard and the Information Society Programme of Brazil (web site design and computer equipment), the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and the Inter-American Development Bank (staff support).
8. The Council called upon the relevant organizations of the United Nations system to give high priority to providing assistance, including technical and financial, within existing mandates, to developing countries in their efforts to overcome infrastructural bottlenecks in telecommunications, transport, logistics and customs operations and to establish a proper legal and regulatory framework (para. 9).	8. One of the objectives of the ICT Task Force is to assist countries in designing national and regional ICT strategies in which assistance is provided to develop a network of stakeholders dedicated to helping countries design ICT strategies that will attract investment. Several concrete initiatives are being pursued by the Task Force such as the acquisition of broadband and the establishment of links among private sector leaders in Africa. ITU established an ICT Regulators' Hotline to assist regulatory agencies with timely and quality responses to their queries. The World Bank developed a new strategy for the ICT sector in September 2001 to assist its member States in developing efficient information infrastructure as the basis for an information-based economy, enabling those countries to make ICT a powerful platform for development. Stressing the inclusive and consultative processes, UNDP launched the ICT Trust Fund in October 2001 with a US$ 5 million contribution from the Government of Japan. The UNDP ICT for Development Trust Fund will support ICT work in six main areas including the design of national e-development strategies. UNCTAD organized expert meetings and other intergovernmental events on capacity-building in e-commerce, dealing with its impact on traditional sectors of the economy of developing countries such as tourism, transport and finance. It also provided technical assistance to Governments concerning specific applications of ICT to sectors such as transport, customs, business information and e-commerce. ITU conducted five case studies on the establishment process of countries' regulatory body in response to an increasing demand for seeking out successful models in regard to the independence and operation of regulatory agencies.

Box 2
World Summit on the Information Society

The World Summit on the Information Society is to be convened in two phases, the first in Geneva in December 2003 and the second in Tunis in 2005. The Summit is expected to develop and foster a clear statement of political will and a concrete action plan for achieving the goals of the information society, while fully reflecting all of the different interests at stake. To capture the challenges and opportunities presented in the information society from diverse angles and perspectives, six themes were proposed to be taken up at the Summit, namely, building the infrastructure, opening the gates, services and applications, the needs of users, developing a framework, and ICT and education. Under each of these broad themes, consideration will be given to the relevant developmental, economic, policy, social, cultural and technological aspects. Further development of the agenda and themes of the Summit will be a key issue for the Preparatory Committee meetings and regional conferences. The Summit is expected to generate adequate conditions for the international community to move towards a common vision and understanding of the societal transformation that has occurred as a result of ICT development.

8. In particular, the United Nations system is encouraged to continue and further their efforts to:

Council's recommendation	*Activities undertaken since the coordination segment of the Council's substantive session of 2001*
9. Support national and regional efforts in integrating national programmes for putting ICT in the service of development into national and/or regional development strategies, as defined and implemented on the basis of national priorities and on the principle of national ownership of such strategies (para. 13 (a)).	9. The United Nations system continues its effort to incorporate the ICT tool for national and regional development, typically in the form of policy advisory, technical assistance, training, and coordination activities. The Digital Opportunity Initiative, a public private partnership of Accenture, the Markle Foundation and UNDP, has compiled a report of the experiences in the deployment of ICT to meet specific development imperatives as well as national ICT strategies in countries. UNDP is also joining forces with the Global Internet Policy Initiative (GIPI) to promote open and democratic access to the Internet in developing countries to foster development. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) has supported the development of national and communication infrastructure plans and strategies in 28 African countries, 15 of which are in the process of implementing their national plans. Under the African Information Society Initiative (AISI), 22 African countries are formulating national ICT policies. As for the human settlement area, UN-Habitat has established various web sites, extranets, databases and graphical information systems to support regional efforts in integrating national programmes on the information flow and knowledge-sharing. The United Nations system has also been

Council's recommendation	*Activities undertaken since the coordination segment of the Council's substantive session of 2001*
	supporting the integration of ICT in government service. For example, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat and the Government of Italy co-organized the International Conference on e-Government for Development in Palermo, Italy, in April 2002 (see A/56/959). The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), in collaboration with the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO), is conducting research on the e-government and e-fiscal leading experiences in Latin America. ECLAC also organized an e-government workshop in January 2002 with special emphasis on e-fiscal issues in collaboration with JETRO, the Inter-American Development Bank and the World Bank.
10. Support national efforts for technological development, targeted towards strengthening national science and technology research and development capacities and to improving the absorptive capacity for technology transfer, integration and diffusion, through appropriately structured international assistance (para. 13 (b)).	10. Several organizations are engaged in building such capacities. Notably, ITU launched in 2001 a multimillion dollar Internet Training Centre Initiative aiming to establish 50 training centres by July 2003 to provide capacity-building for non-profit institutions. These centres will also function as incubators for Internet-related small and medium-sized enterprises. UNCTAD launched the Science and Technology for Development Network web site in consultation with the Commission on Science and Technology for Development in February 2002. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) provides technical assistance in the establishment of new institutional forms such as technology parks, aimed at the dissemination of new technologies, with emphasis on ICT. Adopted at the World Youth Forum of the United Nations System in August 2001, the Dakar Youth Empowerment Strategy (A/C.3/56/2, annex I) called for the establishment of an Education and Information and Communication Technologies fund to promote North-South and South-South cooperation (para. 18). FAO plans to develop adapted versions of the Virtual Extension Research Communication Networks prototype, and improved versions of multimedia farm information networks in selected countries. The UNESCO University-Industry-Science Partnership (UNISPAR) programme aims to promote university-industry cooperation for research, training and technology transfer. UN-Habitat supports national efforts for technological development on human settlements issues through various training and capacity-building manuals and its flagship reports.
11. Improve coordination, complementarity and mutual links among knowledge networks developed by individual organizations of the United Nations system, including its regional organizations (para. 13 (c)).	11. The establishment of the ICT Task Force enhanced the mutual collaboration among organizations of the United Nations system. The coordination effort of the United Nations system is expected to increase further in the preparation and the organization of the World Summit on the Information Society, as recommended by the General Assembly in its resolution 56/183 (see box 2). The Summit's preparations are supported through a High-level Summit Organizing

Council's recommendation	*Activities undertaken since the coordination segment of the Council's substantive session of 2001*
	Committee, aiming to coordinate the efforts of the United Nations system in the preparation, organization and holding of the Summit. Coordination efforts have been notably strengthened at all regions. ECE is the focal point for the five regional commissions in the preparatory process for the Summit in 2003. With regard to other networking efforts, UNCTAD supports the Global Trade Point Network (GTPN) relying on a number of regional sub-networks closely interrelated with other national and regional networks from the private and public sectors. The UNCTAD Science and Technology for Development Network (STDev) has signed a partnership agreement with the Knowledge Economy at the Development Gateway (World Bank). It helps build and share knowledge and development solutions by submitting content and events on science and technology for development. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), in collaboration with UNIDO, has been working to enhance an existing feasibility assessment software to integrate environmental factors (Sustainable Alternatives Network (SANet)). During the emergency in Afghanistan, the World Food Programme (WFP) acted as inter-agency telecommunications coordinating body for assessing inter-agency communications for the United Nations bases in the country and supporting inter-agency communications.
12. Support the recently established ICT Task Force as a framework and an approach within which the identification, assessment, transfer, adaptation and post-transfer follow-up of knowledge and ICT can take place while ensuring coherence and complementarily between the ICT Task Force and other ICT initiatives (para. 13 (d)).	12. Meetings of the six thematic Working Groups of the ICT Task Force (see box 1) demonstrated the strengthening and increasingly productive interaction between the thematic Working Groups and their respective counterparts, such as the Implementation Teams of the Digital Opportunity Task Force (DOT Force). An effort was made to incorporate the Health InterNetwork, launched in September 2000 by the Secretary-General, into ICT Task Force activities. The collaboration of the ICT Task Force thematic Working Groups with various other mechanisms including the Dot Force enhances end results and ensure coherence toward achieving the millennium development goals. The ICT Task Force considered at its second meeting ways to contribute to the World Summit on the Information Society. It was noted at the meeting that the ICT Task Force could assist in building a regional consensus on key issues through regional networks, as well as play a key role in raising awareness of the Summit. The Committee on Information at its twenty-fourth session agreed on draft resolution B on the United Nations public information policies and activities (see A/AC.198/2002/L.3) which, inter alia, commended the Secretary-General for the establishment of the ICT Task Force, among other entities, with a view to bridging the digital divide and as a response to the continuing gulf between developed and developing countries (para. 36).

Council's recommendation	*Activities undertaken since the coordination segment of the Council's substantive session of 2001*
13. Ensure that the principles and approaches that govern these partnerships and arrangements should build on the firm foundation of the United Nations development goals. Without imposing any rigidity in partnership agreements, agencies of the United Nations should continue to adhere to a common principled approach to partnership which includes the following principles: common purpose, transparency, bestowing no unfair advantages upon any entity that is in partnership with the United Nations, and not compromising the independence and neutrality of the United Nations system in general and the agency in particular (para. 13 (e)).	13. The report of the Secretary-General submitted to the General Assembly at its 56th session entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and all relevant partners, in particular the private sector" (A/56/323), reiterated that the cooperation between the United Nations and non-State actors should be viewed as a means of achieving United Nations goals and enhancing performance, not as an end in itself. In response to the report, the Assembly adopted resolution 56/76 entitled "Towards global partnerships". In that resolution, the Assembly invited the United Nations system to continue to adhere to a common approach to partnership that included principles recommended by the Council's agreed conclusions 2001/1. There are currently many examples of partnerships. The Global Compact initiative (see para. 19) continues to serve as an overall value framework for cooperation with the business community that offers a useful point of reference for good corporate citizenship when choosing business partners. The Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI) demonstrated the effectiveness of strong partnerships with the private sector and with civil society partnerships after two years of its official launch. GAVI partnership differed from past immunization initiatives because it included vaccine manufacturers as full partners for the first time. To further the effort in achieving the millennium development goals, another initiative on partnership has been discussed at the preparatory process of the World Summit on Sustainable Development which will be held in Johannesburg in August-September 2002.
14. Assist, upon request, Governments of developing countries in establishing legal and institutional frameworks that will facilitate the successful acquisition, adaptation and utilization of technology, especially ICT (para. 13 (f)).	14. Aiming to promote the use of performance and policy-oriented data and indicators for better urban policy and planning, UN-Habitat has established the Urban Observatory Network which is designed to help Governments, local authorities and their civil partners to monitor progress in implementing the Habitat Agenda.[6] UNCTAD provided assistance to interested developing countries and countries with economies in transition in the application of ICT to various sectors of their economies, notably customs and transport. UNESCO is currently engaged in developing an international legal framework for facilitating access to ICT through its work on the development of a recommendation promoting multilingualism and universal access in cyberspace. ESCAP works with its 16 member countries and economic entities of the Asia Pacific Council for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business to increase awareness and application of the United Nations-sponsored recommendations and standards for e-business. ECA support to member States in developing and implementing national ICT strategies includes assistance in creating the necessary legal and institutional frameworks for the development of the ICT sector in the countries. ECA also provides support in the establishment of regional networks of regulators such as the African Telecommunications

Council's recommendation	*Activities undertaken since the coordination segment of the Council's substantive session of 2001*
	Regulators' Network, the West African Telecom Regulators Association, and the Telecommunication Regulators Association of Southern Africa.
15. Strengthen programmes and projects for education, institutional capacity-building and human resources development for ICT through collaborative and joint programming and promoting partnerships among academic and research institutions of developing and developed countries, as well as countries with economies in transition (para. 13 (g)).	15. The United Nations system has been assisting a significant number of activities for education, institutional capacity-building and human resources development for ICT at national, regional and global levels. Many of these activities are the results of collaborative effort of the system and academic and research institutions. For example, UNCTAD launched "Compendium and user guide to UNCTAD's work on issues of technology for Development (1975-2001)" as part of the follow-up activities for post-Doha partnership in capacity-building for developing countries in international negotiations. The United Nations University (UNU) acts as a mediator for technology transfer between developed and developing countries and for research exchange in the field of ICT and other technologies through its research and training centres such as the UNU Institute for New Technologies and the UNU International Institute for Software Technology (UNU/IIST). UNU/IIST provides fellowships to lecturers, researchers and engineers from developing countries. UNU/IIST also promotes South-South cooperation in the IT area and conducts training for women entrepreneurs in collaboration with the Information Technology Centre for Africa and Cisco Systems.
16. Support national efforts to establish the necessary human and physical infrastructure for ICT (para. 13 (h)).	16. Many ICT on-site and online training opportunities have been offered by the United Nations system in diverse areas. The United Nations Information Technology Service (UNITeS), in collaboration with the United Nations Volunteers (UNV), sent 65 ICT volunteers to support more than 12 developing countries in 2001. The work of UNITeS was further extended to academic institutions which provided their students as volunteers. The ICT Task Force is implementing an ICT policy and training programme for ambassadors and diplomats in collaboration with the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Informatics, Intel, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Media Lab and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR). The International Training Centre of the International Labour Organization (ILO) has been developing online training courses for human resources development and organizing on-site workshops in partnership with academic institutions. UNDP, in partnership with Cisco Systems, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and UNV, has been offering a training programme to students in least developed countries, aiming to provide job opportunities in the Internet economy. Efforts have been made also for physical infrastructure supports. The ICT Task Force has initiated a partnership with bandwidth holders to explore possible ways for least developed countries to obtain, at very low cost, some of the

Council's recommendation	*Activities undertaken since the coordination segment of the Council's substantive session of 2001*
	excess capacity that satellite and cable companies currently have. The World Bank's "African Connection" is a region-wide and Africa-led and -managed initiative to improve telecommunications infrastructure and the application of information technology. ILO, in partnership with its counterparts, offers workshops worldwide on the impact of ICT on labour markets for Governments, workers and employers.
17. Assist developing countries and regional institutions of developing countries in building local, national and regional networks of partnerships suited to the demands of their particular circumstances and needs (para. 13 (i)).	17. As discussed earlier, regional nodes and networks of the ICT Task Force have been established. Chairs of these regional networks will form an ad hoc coordinating committee called "Network of Networks" in order to further collaboration, synergy and complementarity of efforts. In addition, the ICT Task Force established a web site that contains a matchmaking feature, presenting a list of project proposals with a view to facilitating forming of partnerships and collaborative arrangements between interested parties. The UNDP Asia-Pacific Development Information Programme (APDIP) provides an information hosting service for regional programmes enabling the provision at minimum costs of Internet-based services, such as Web, newsgroups, e-mail and databases. The service is envisaged to foster information sharing and distribution among development institutions with regional activities. In Africa, the Partnership for Information and Communication Technologies in Africa (PICTA) acts as an informal group of donors and executing agencies committed to improving information exchange and collaboration around ICT activities. PICTA builds on the work of the African Networking Initiative (ANI) and the African Internet Forum (AIF). ESCWA conducted a study in 2001 on Technology Capacity-building Initiatives in its member countries. The study provided, inter alia, case studies and a framework that can help member countries to create and disseminate new institutional forms for technological capacity-building and partnership suited to their development needs.
18. Encourage partnership arrangements among chambers of commerce and other business and industry organizations in developed and developing countries in order to assist in spreading best practices, including training in technical skills and know-how, management practices and the use of new management tools, and institutional cooperation (para. 13 (j)).	18. As part of the support activities to promote the Global Compact, the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) has been disseminating information through its web site on how the private sector is fulfilling the Compact through corporate actions. ICC has also developed investment guides to five least developed countries in collaboration with UNCTAD. A significant number of chambers of commerce, industry associations, trade promotion bodies and similar organizations are actively involved in the Trade Point Programme of UNCTAD and therefore benefit in its activities concerning best-practice dissemination in the use of ICT, especially their application to international trade. ECE hosts the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business. The Centre is a platform for Governments, industry organizations and the private sector to develop and exchange information on trade

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	standards, best practices and policies. UNEP is currently finalizing a cooperation agreement with the World Federation of Engineering Organizations and the International Federation of Consulting Engineers on cleaner technologies in the SANet programme. UNEP and ITU with major ICT companies have launched the UNEP Division of Technology, Industry and Economics (DTIE) Global e-Sustainability Initiative to involve the telecommunication sector companies in managing their business operations in an environmentally friendly way and to promote sustainable business practices worldwide. To help coordinate relief and reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan, WFP has established a mobile Global System for Mobile Communication (GSM) telephone network in Kabul for humanitarian workers and the Interim Administration under the programme "First on the Ground" in partnership with Ericsson.
19. Encourage the private sector towards accepting and implementing the principle of good corporate citizenship, that is, bringing social values and responsibilities to bear on a conduct and policy premised on profit incentives, in conformity with national laws and regulations (para. 13 (k)).	19. At the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly, many Member States expressed support for the Global Compact and a range of delegations offered views on the role of the United Nations partnerships with the business community. The Compact is aimed at advancing global corporate citizenship based on universal principles encompassing human rights, labour and environment. Since its operational launch in July 2000, the Compact has continued to gain momentum. Successful introductory events were organized in over 20 countries, including Brazil, China, India and the Russian Federation. Its core four activities, namely, the Learning Forum, Outreach, Policy Dialogue and Projects have produced tangible results. At its fifty-sixth session, the General Assembly adopted resolution 56/76 in which it encouraged the private sector to accept and implement the principle of good corporate citizenship.
20. In cooperation with other partners, design special programmes for the least developed countries and Africa that will enhance their capacity to benefit from knowledge and technology transfer (para. 13 (l)).	20. The African Stakeholders Network (ASN), an African regional node of the ICT Task Force, has been launched to ensure that United Nations efforts to bridge the digital divide in Africa are better coordinated, and more inclusive and reflective of the significant efforts already under way to develop an African information society. The African Information Society Initiative (AISI) is the African mandate to use ICT to accelerate economic and social development in Africa. It was initiated by the collaborative actions of a network of partners including ECA, ITU, UNESCO, the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and the Bellanet International Secretariat. It supported 24 African countries in developing their own national information and communication infrastructure policies, plans and strategies. UNESCO, in cooperation with the Council of American Overseas Research Centers (CAORC), prepared a pilot digital library in three West African languages that contains information for neo-literates. The UN-Habitat Regional Office for Africa and the Arab States designs and implements special training and information material in the

Council's recommendation	*Activities undertaken since the coordination segment of the Council's substantive session of 2001*
	field of human settlements for least developed countries to be used on low-end computers.
21. Provide assistance to civil society institutions of developing countries, especially their small and medium-sized enterprises and non-governmental organizations, in order to enable them to participate fully in partnerships with the United Nations system and partners from the industrialized countries (para. 13 (m)).	21. The United Nations system has a long history and experience in working with the civil society. In April 2001, the United Nations Informal Regional Network of Non-Governmental Organizations was formally launched in Aracaju, Brazil. This initiative, spearheaded by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, is intended to lift some of the barriers to inclusive, effective non-governmental organization participation in the development activities of the Economic and Social Council and its subsidiary bodies and the United Nations system. The Informal Network aims to provide access to information and ICT through a system designed to promote interactive exchange among non-governmental organizations and between non-governmental organizations and the United Nations. In addition, the Informal Network offers unique training options using both traditional and state-of-the-art IT capacity-building programmes to enable national and regional organizations to participate effectively in economic and social development. Efforts have been made also to bridge the partnership of civil society institutions between the developing and developed countries. For instance, recognizing the importance of the North-South and South-South collaboration in ICT for development, ESCAP builds ICT capacity of women's organizations through women's electronic networking training in collaboration with the Asian Women's Resource Exchange, a regional women's non-governmental organization. As for the partnership assistance to small and medium-sized enterprises, UNIDO has initiated several projects, including "Colombian Exchange network" aimed to facilitate business cooperation and knowledge partnerships. ILO has created an Internet portal for small enterprises in Indonesia and carried out a survey of the use of the Internet by small enterprises in Zimbabwe.
22. Develop mechanisms and tools to monitor, measure and evaluate the effectiveness of knowledge and technology transfer partnerships in terms of their performance, especially in relation to achieving specific socio-economic goals and targets as defined by the partners. A deliberate effort needs to be pursued in order to improve effective access to and transfer of this knowledge to developing countries (para. 13 (n)).	22. Although no mechanisms that specifically measure knowledge and technology transfer partnerships have been observed, the United Nations system is fully aware of the importance of evaluating the effectiveness of its activities to support access to and transfer of knowledge in developing countries. Commission on Science and Technology for Development indicators of technological development and ICT monitor, measure and evaluate connectivity inputs and access to ICT. Although these indicators are not designed to measure partnerships, they assess the essential foundations for knowledge and technology transfer partnerships, without which these partnerships cannot occur. ECA in cooperation with IDRC of Canada is implementing Scan-ICT, a project that aims to build support for the phased development of a comprehensive African capability to collect and manage key information needed to monitor

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	the growing investment in ICT as well as the transition of Africa to the status of an information society. ESCAP has been strengthening its activities in the area of ICT for poverty alleviation and the impact evaluation is an integral part of all activities.

III. Conclusions and recommendations

9. Since the last session of the Council, the advancement of technology, especially that of ICT, has continued. The Council's agreed conclusions 2001/1 and the ministerial declaration of its 2000 high-level segment underscore several critical interventions. They remain valid, and progress has been made in implementing them. Yet, **further continuous efforts are required of the international community, including Governments, the private sector, civil society and other relevant stakeholders to keep up with the rapid progress of technology in order to support developing countries with respect to fully benefiting from digital and technological opportunities. A coordination role of the United Nations in this regard is greatly expected. Similarly, the Council may wish to encourage further the United Nations system, Governments, the private sector, civil society and other partners to continue to actively participate in and support the work of the ICT Task Force in light of the progress achieved by the Task Force and its potential to further enhance its role as a bridge between the ICT and development communities.**

10. While evaluations of the implementation of projects and programmes have been conducted by their executing agencies in the United Nations system, there have been no United Nations system-wide mechanisms and tools designed specifically for measuring the effectiveness of knowledge and technology transfer partnerships. **The United Nations system may need to explore the potential of common mechanisms in this regard through sharing further information and resources.** The common country assessment, which forms the basis for the preparation of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework document, could serve as a basis for further in-depth sectoral analysis on ICT.

11. **The Council may wish to encourage the United Nations system including the regional commissions to continue to play a catalytic role in the preparation of the World Summit on the Information Society to bring together Governments, multilateral institutions, the donor community, the private sector, civil society and all other stakeholders. It also may wish to encourage the United Nations system to take full account of the agreed conclusions 2001/1 in preparation of the Summit. The ICT Task Force could be encouraged to contribute by building a regional consensus on key issues through regional networks as well as by playing a key role in raising awareness of the Summit.**

12. The Council may wish to take into account, in its deliberations, the outcome of the special meeting of the General Assembly devoted to ICT for development, held on 17 and 18 June 2002.

Notes

[1] See A/56/3, chap. V, para. 7.

[2] See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 3* (A/55/3/Rev.1), chap. III, para. 17.

[3] In preparing sect. II, contributions were received from the International Labour Organization (ILO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the Economic and Social Commission for Western Africa (ESCWA), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), the United Nations University (UNU), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Health Organization (WHO).

[4] See *From Beijing to Beijing+5* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.01.IV.3), part three, sect. G.

[5] *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

[6] *Report of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), Istanbul, 3-14 June 1996* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.97.IV.6), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.